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## In visit to Willow Valley Communities, Jaworski considers the state of today's NFL [column]

JEFF YOUNG | LNP CORRESPONDENT 12 hrs ago



Former Philadelphia Eagles quarterback and ESPN analyst Ron Jaworski speaks to the Men's Luncheon group at Willow Valley Communities' Chautauqua Hall on Tuesday, July 30, 2019.

Submitted

Roger Goodell has done right by the NFL, particularly regarding what should always be its top concern.

The new rules around pass interference amount to an overreaction, one that likely will become a long-term negative.

And while a shorter preseason schedule is a good idea, an 18-game regular season is not. But the money involved just might make it a reality anyway.

All of the above are courtesy of Ron Jaworski, who speaks with the authority of a 17-year NFL veteran — not to mention a guy who also spent several years analyzing the game he loves for ESPN.

“It’s the greatest game, to me, in the world,” the former Eagles quarterback said Tuesday before a speaking engagement at Willow Valley Communities. “People want to be fans of something that is wholesome, and (the NFL) needs to keep it that way.”

Wholesome is not the popular description of today's NFL, and domestic violence is one reason. Most recently, Chiefs wide receiver Tyreek Hill was investigated but not charged when his 3-year-old son suffered a broken arm. Neither was Hill disciplined by the league.

"Quite honestly, I was surprised the commissioner didn't come down harder on Tyreek Hill," Jaworski said. "I don't know all the details of the case, but what I saw and what I heard wasn't pretty."

It's worth remembering here that Major League Baseball suspended Phillies outfielder Odubel Herrera for the season, without pay, even though assault charges against him were dropped a month ago. And Hill had been arrested after a similar incident in 2014, while at Oklahoma State.

"Anything that would fall in that category, people need to be held accountable," Jaworski said.

On the field, meanwhile, pass interference will be under the microscope with new rules for 2019, allowing challenges and reviews of calls and no-calls. Jaworski says it's a "knee-jerk reaction" to the no-call that helped the Rams defeat New Orleans in January's NFC title game.

"The game is becoming much, much too long," he said. "I know the theory is to make the game better, and if there's a bad call, correct the bad call. But players play the game, and they make errors. And officials officiate the game, and they make errors. The human part of the game is there."

Jaworski ranks both of these issues behind player safety, which is where he believes Goodell has been most effective.

"He's made the game safer, and I think that is very, very important," he said, "not only for the present-day players, but also for college, high school and little league players."

Any longtime Eagles fan knows the punishment Jaworski absorbed in the 1970s, when he helped lead Dick Vermeil's Eagles to Super Bowl XV. His 116 straight starts is still the eighth-longest streak among NFL quarterbacks.

So the game's inherent violence is reason enough for him to reject the idea of an 18-game regular season, while also shortening what he calls a "meaningless" preseason slate. But the prospect of two more game checks per year, he said, may one day be too much for players to pass up. Especially when the average career length, according to the NFL Players Association, is 3.3 years.

Not even all those pass interference reviews are likely to inflate that number.

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